priority in communication to emergency calls;

voice and data communication facility; and

emergency calling advantage.

The proposal is under active consideration and a final decision in the matter is expected to be taken shortly.

Cultural Invasion in Kashmir

*620. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in Kargil sector of Kashmir, efforts are being made by foreign-inspired agencies to supplant Indian/Kashmiri culture by importing Iranian culture of fundamentalism as appeared in the Indian Express of 8th June, 1998;

(b) if so, how the foreign-inspired trust slushing with foreign funds are allowed to function in this highly sensitive area of Kashmir; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to see that foreign-inspired trusts/bodies are not allowed to function so that local identity of the people is not jeopardised and Indian culture continues to flourish?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) to (c) The State Government has informed that Muslim population in Kargil District is dominated by Shias and they owe their allegiance to Imam Khomeini, the late spiritual leader of Iran. An organisation, namely Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust, Kargil was established in 1989, the main aim of which is to impart religious education to the youth and make all Muslims aware of the religion. Some Officials of the Embassy of Iran in India have visited Kargil on the invitation of the said organisation in the past. There are also some allegations that the said Trust is receiving funds from Iran.

The state Government has further informed that the Indian/Kashmiri culture has very deep roots and is very much flourishing in Kargil. Steps have also been taken by way of organising cultural programmes, seminars, symposiums, etc. to see that Indian/Kashmiri culture is nurtured in the right manner. Electronic media is also playing a vital role in this regard. Besides, a close watch is kept/maintained on the activities of the said Trust vis-a-vis the other religious and political organisations.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

HPT-32 Basic Training Aircraft

4592. DR. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the reliability of HAL manufactured HPT-32 basic training aircraft of the IAF remained suspect from the outset; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to replace them to avoid problems of snags in engines?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir. There have been no doubts about the reliability of HPT-32 basic training aircraft designed, developed and supplied by HAL to IAF. The fleet has logged more than 1,50,000 flying hours.

(b) Not applicable in view of reply to part (a) of the Question.

Withdrawal of Forces from China Borders

4593. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item that appeared in 'The Hindustan Times' dated 18th June, 1998, under the caption "Sleepy Indo-China border comes to life";

(b) whether India-China had agreed, last year to withdraw their armed forces away from borders;

(c) whether Government propose to take steps to talk to China to restore status-quo-ante to keep the border peaceful; if so, the details for the proposal; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Sleepy Indo-China border comes to life" which appeared in the 'Hindustan Times' dated 18-6-1998. Contents of the news-item are the author's own perceptions and conclusions about the situation in India-China border areas.

2. No agreement was reached between India and China last year to reduce or limit military forces in border areas. An agreement on maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the line of actual control in the India-China border areas was signed by the two countries in September 1993. To further the process, another agreement on confidence building measures was signed in 1996 during the visit of the Chinese President to India. Provisions in these agreements, inter-alia, lay down some important guiding principles for reduction or limitation of identified categories of military forces deployed in mutually agreed geographical zones along the LAC to ceilings to be mutually agreed upon by both the countries in conformity with the principle of mutual and equal security. This is also linked with the clarification of India-China line of actual control.

3. Both India and China are committed to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas. They are also committed to work towards a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question.

Manufacturing of Nuclear Weapons

4594. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to manufacture nuclear weapons in the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) India is a nuclear weapon state. The underground nuclear tests carried out by India on May 11 and 13, 1998 helped to create an effective deterrent against the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction against India. The devices that were tested in the series were an optimised fission device, a thermonuclear device and three sub-kilotonne devices.

Recruitment in Armed Forces

4595. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recruitment to the three services have been reduced in Southern States;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the number of persons recruited to the armed forces has been reduced for the last three years; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and steps taken to recruit more persons?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.